MINI GRANT HELPS DENVER LAW STUDENTS EMPOWER YOUTH

By Alexi Freeman, Associate Professor of the Practice of Law, Sturm College of Law

This past semester, Denver Law and the nonprofit LYRIC (Learn Your Rights in Colorado) partnered to offer a two-credit course for law students to teach LYRIC’s “Know Your Rights” Workshops – workshops that provide an interactive way to teach the 4th, 5th, and 6th amendments. LYRIC is a nonprofit aiming to enable young people to become active and knowledgeable citizens who feel empowered to exercise their rights if they are contacted by the police. Ultimately, the programming emphasizes five major points for youth to take away: the right to remain silent; the right to ask police whether youth are free to leave; the right to inform police that you want a lawyer and that you want your parent; and the right to state that you do not consent to a search. In today’s political climate, this type of training is critically important for building youth power, protecting safety, and ensuring survival.

Buttressed by CCESL’s funding, ten students delivered LYRIC workshops to over 200 middle- and high-school youth throughout the Metro-Denver area, expanding LYRIC’s capacity and broadening its reach. Specifically, students visited different schools – Adams City Middle School, North Middle School and Overland High School in Aurora. Students also visited local nonprofits – Colorado Youth at Risk, Denver Urban Debate League, and the Mental Health Center of Denver. Additionally, students partnered with the afterschool programs offered by the Center for Urban Education at Bruce Randolph School, Kepner Middle School, Manual High School, and MLK Jr. Middle School.

From talking about how to handle a locker search at school, to discussing whether youth can videotape police, to brainstorming ways to engage parents/guardians about youth rights, Denver Law students helped youth grapple with many questions that affect their daily lives and decisions. One student participant shared, “It is clear students are worried about encounters with the police or ICE by the questions they ask during the presentations. Because many of these students are forced to live with this fear, Know Your Rights presentations are especially important to help students feel a sense of empowerment. It has been amazing to see the (continued on page 2)
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students’ eyes widen when we tell them they do not have to, and should not, speak to the police or consent to the police searching their things.” Another Denver Law student noted that, “At first, I was saddened that these presentations were being given to middle-school students, realizing that these topics touch upon the actual experiences of the students and their families. After interacting with the students and teachers of LYRIC, I was filled with hope from the knowing that schools are practically preparing students instead of fueling naivety or protecting innocence, which simply prolongs the inevitable exposure to truth and life.”

Many bar associations require or at least encourage lawyers to engage in pro-bono legal services. Community education should also be a component of every lawyer’s toolkit. It asks the lawyer not to represent clients but to help arm them with an understanding of the law without providing individualized legal advice. Figuring out this balance is no easy task, but when done well, the results can be incredibly important for avoiding brush-ins with the law, empowering individuals to assert their rights, and helping to make the legal system more accessible.

CCESL WELCOMES VICKIE BERKLEY, DU GRAND CHALLENGES PROGRAM MANAGER

CCESL is excited to welcome Vickie Berkley to the team as the program manager for DU Grand Challenges. During Vickie’s career, she has worked in the private, public and non-profit sectors. She brings extensive experience building campus-community partnerships that are mutually beneficial, create rewarding learning experiences and provide a public good. She was instrumental in creating a number of programs and initiatives at both the University of Colorado Denver and the University of Missouri Columbia that engage students in real world projects while benefiting communities.

Vickie holds a Bachelor’s degree in Education and a Master’s degree in Community Development with an emphasis in Community Education, both earned from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Vickie also studied European Union programs and policies at the National University of Ireland Galway in 2000-01 as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar. In 2017, Vickie was honored with the Campus Compact Western Region ‘Engaged Professional’ award.

Make sure to check out Vickie’s article on page 3 to hear more about the wonderful things planned for DU Grand Challenges this year.
DU GRAND CHALLENGES PROGRAM UPDATE

By Vickie Berkley, Program Manager of DU Grand Challenges

Since the launch of DU Grand Challenges on October 2, 2017, a number of programs have been rolled out. Before I provide you with an update, let me briefly introduce myself. I joined DU as program manager of DU Grand Challenges in October and bring a background in both community engagement in higher education and fund-raising. I’m passionate about harnessing the innovation and expertise among faculty and students to address the pressing needs of communities – locally, regionally and globally. With the quality of community engagement activity that already exists across campus, I can’t imagine a more exciting place to be right now than DU.

We are currently in the Aspirations phase of Living, the first of three issues that interconnect with the theme of DU Grand Challenges, Thriving Communities. For those who have not had the chance to attend a DU Grand Challenge Event, DU Grand Challenges, Thriving Communities encompasses three broad topics: Living, Working, and Participating. Each of these topics will be rolled out in three year cycles, enabling DU and the Denver communities to examine aspirations, plan actions, and measure achievements. Check out some of the programming that has already happened in the aspirations phase of living:

DU Grand Challenge Scholar Grants were awarded to:

Faculty: Kimberly Bender, professor at the Graduate School of Social Work and Matt Rutherford, associate professor at the Ritchie School of Engineering and Computer Science
Title of Research: Design Thinking for Public Good: Youth Homelessness
Community Partner: Urban Peak

Faculty: Nancy Reichman, professor of sociology and criminology
Title of Research: Living a Middle-class Life in Colorado
Community Partner: The Women’s Foundation of Colorado

These proposals were selected because there use of scholarship to develop shared aspirations with community partners for improving daily living in our communities. Improving daily living is a broad goal, that can include (but is not limited to) meeting basic needs, addressing violence, advancing environmental sustainability, promoting healthy development and achieving social justice. The DU Grand Challenges program is committed to funding faculty scholarship and creative work as a way of building and advancing community partnership. Make sure to stay tuned as we continue to roll out grant opportunities under DU Grand Challenges.

DU Grand Challenges Forum Series

The goal of the DU Grand Challenges Forum series is to provide opportunities to collectively build aspirations for improving daily living in our communities. The first DU Grand Challenges Forum, held on November 7th was on Scholarship for Migration. We then continued the conversation on January 16 with a focus on environmental sustainability – issues related conservation and preservation– as an entry point to thinking about the interconnected, complex issues that affect daily living in our communities.
The Forums are set up so that lightning talks are presented by both faculty and a community leader on a topic in the Living theme. Participants are then invited to move into smaller discussion areas to converse about the issues under the Forum topic and their connections and aspirations for improving daily living.

We hope that you will be able to join us for one of the DU Grand Challenges Forums that remains under the theme of Living. The Forums, which occur in Anderson Academic Commons, are scheduled for the following dates and topics:

February 22  
Health and Healthy Development

April 18  
Meeting Basic Needs

May 16  
Addressing Violence

DU Grand Challenges Class Grants

The DU Grand Challenge’s class grants aim to support course development and/or projects that connect to the DU Grand Challenges issue of Living and respond to the aspirations phase in the Grand Challenges arc (Aspirations, Action, Achievement). Annually, we will invest in faculty time to develop new or re-develop existing courses that are related to the Grand Challenges.

Grants up to $500 are available and are intended to cover class-related expenses beyond normal departmental support.

We will continue to add events and programs as we move forward with DU Grand Challenges. If you would like more information on any of these activities and ways to get involved with DU Grand Challenges you can visit our website or contact me at vickie.berkley@du.edu, 303-871-3499.

**CALLING ALL APPOINTED FACULTY! APPLY FOR PUBLIC GOOD FUNDING!**

**What is the Public Good Fund?**

In 2001, the University of Denver formally adopted language in our vision statement that commits the institution to becoming “a great private university dedicated to the public good.” As a means to achieving this vision, the Provost has provided an annual fund of $100,000 to promote and increase faculty public good research and outreach at the University.

**Funding Type & Amount**

Grants up to $15,000 are available for projects that will result in measureable impacts in the community through established community partnerships. Please note that the Public Good Fund Review Committee welcomes proposals with smaller budgets.

**Submission Process and Deadline**

Grants are reviewed once a year. The deadline for proposals is Monday, March 5, 2018 at noon.

**Proposal Form and Application Materials**

The full Public Good RFP can be found at: [https://goo.gl/PWmpD](https://goo.gl/PWmpD)

**Eligibility**

All appointed faculty members are eligible to apply.
2017 Newman Civic Fellows Conference

By Marie Spence, Community Engagement Corp Tutor

I had the opportunity to attend the 2017 Newman Civic Fellows National Conference. This conference was an amazing experience for me to meet and interact with other change-makers across the country! There were activities in which we were encouraged to find inclusive solutions to social justice issues, often woven in with political issues, as well as with sharing our own passions and experiences. On the first night of the conference, a panel of Boston-local change makers shared their experiences in law, housing, and advocacy, providing perspective on the importance of the work we are all doing now in shaping a more just future. We also engaged in a Senate simulation where we had to attempt to pass a mock bill regarding farming. Finally, we attended a TedX event at the JFK Presidential Library.

There were great opportunities to learn about the importance of compromise in collaboration, as well as to hear from multiple speakers who were engaged in the market, media, and chang- making. The speakers discussed how they integrated social justice values into their work. While the conference offered a lot of great activities and workshops, the best part of the conference was the inspiration I found in my fellow change makers. To hear about the amazing work that other students are doing across the United States was comforting in the sense that it reminded me that the work I see being done around me at home does not stand alone. Rather, public good work at home and across the country is part of something larger. This realization rekindled my passion for the work I engage in. I was moved by the strength, passion, and ingenuity of my peers, and this conference was an amazing way to build a network of knowledge, resources, and friends.

MLK Marade with DU Public Achievement

By Liz Shaw, Public Achievement Team Lead

This was my first year experiencing the Martin Luther King, Jr. Marade with Public Achievement and needless to say, IT. WAS. AWESOME. Per usual, the weather was not necessarily conducive to extended periods of time outside, but the number of people who bundled up and braved the cold to unite together in the fight for justice and the realization of human rights for everyone was both inspiring and encouraging. I felt a strong sense of pride not only in my capacity as a Team Lead in PA, but also as a student at the University of Denver.

As a Team Lead for PA at South High School, I was thrilled to have a strong contingent of students march in the Marade despite the snowy day! For many that joined us, this was their first time participating. The students led unifying chants during the march, and carried creative posters celebrating MLK, Jr. and proclaiming what justice and solidarity mean to them. The Marade was a powerful reminder to our group that we (and our class projects) are part of many larger efforts in the fights for social justice in our city and our country.

As a student, it was also empowering and fortifying to enjoy the company of so many DU students, faculty, staff, and affiliates marching for justice. Denver hosts one of the largest Marades in the country, the result of a year’s worth of planning by many, and I hope that we continue to have such strong representation from DU in the years to come!
PUBLIC ACHIEVEMENT HEADS TO THE MOUNTAINS

By Gabe Conley, Public Achievement Team Lead

Public Achievement (PA) is a youth civic engagement initiative focused on the most basic concepts of citizenship, democracy and public work. It is built upon the framework of community organizing. At the PA retreat with CCESL, team lead members and coaches unpacked the roots and meaning of Public Achievement through various activities and open dialogue.

Public Achievement draws on the talents and desires of ordinary people to build a better world. Team leads and coaches work closely with K-12 students to identify issues that students care about within the school and the community. Together, these teams conduct community-based research and carry out a public work and service-learning project to address the issues they identified.

While at the Public Achievement retreat, I learned how important it is to establish a sense of community and bond with my team members. This helped us perform effectively by learning how to trust and be vulnerable with each other, which in turn increased communication within the team. As a team lead, I built trust and bonded with my coaches by learning about their strength and weakness and asking them to set goals for themselves.

At the retreat, team lead members had the opportunity to discuss culture and community with their fellow coaches by first establishing the room as a free space where we had respectful engagement and dialogue around tension and difficult topics. As a team lead member I realized that culture can be thought of in many different ways beyond simply geographic location. In fact, most of the open dialogue and activities were centered on the three concepts: privilege and power, culture and competency, and student development.

- Privilege and Power: I learned how essential it is to have open dialogue and discussion around privilege, and how privilege could be a source of power to undermine marginalized students experiences. Additionally, I learned, through discussion and dialogue, how important it is to not only acknowledge the privileges that we may hold, but to also acknowledge the systematic oppressive issues that others are enduring in order to move forward as a community.
- Culture and Competency: We also discussed how culture and competency is a fact of public life. In the public world, I often tend to ignore the daily encounters with a variety of different people, ideas, histories and cultures. However, the open dialogue at the retreat helped me empathize with others by recognizing and acknowledging where the other person may be coming from. To effectively solve public cultural issues, I learned how important it is to listen, appreciate, and work with others that come from different identities and backgrounds. I realized that despite the different identities and background one holds, we are all affected by the same public issues and problems. In the end, I learned to embrace the different cultures and perspective one holds because everyone brings unique ideas and solutions to the table.

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- Student Development: We examined how to give students the necessary tools to self-reflect on how their lived experiences shape who they are. Through self-reflection, my self-awareness has grown significantly by being able to identify my strengths, weaknesses, and mistakes. Once I could identify these, it made the goal setting process for myself a lot easier because I knew exactly what I wanted to achieve and how I wanted to achieve it.

I believe that leadership is holding yourself accountable, guiding your teammates to success, and identifying where your strength and weaknesses lie. By being a good leader, I realized how important it is to hear my team’s requests and acknowledge the group as a whole. Being a leader means making change in your community and encouraging your neighbors to do the same.

At the retreat, I, as a team lead member, had the opportunity to explore my leadership style through self-reflection. As I began to self-reflect on my experiences, I realized how important mentorship was to me. A mentor provided me with a sense of direction and support to get me where I am now and where I am headed. That said, as I begin to create the type of leadership style I want within my team, I make sure that I am able to mentor my coaches to the best of my ability.

Overall, the retreat has helped me understand Public Achievement and it’s roots. Through PA, I have learned how powerful and impacting it is for young students to change their community through community organizing. From the retreat, I see how PA strives to make an impact on young students through team building activities and discussions around social justice issues within the classroom. By initiating these two methods, students build strong relationship bonds with others and self-reflect in order to become self-aware and grounded within the issues. Because of this, I believe that students can grow their self-awareness along with their ability to stand up and fight against social justice issues within their community.

A BELATED INTRODUCTION TO PUKSTA SCHOLAR MARGARITA SOLTERO-GUTIERREZ

Puksta Project Focus: After having witnessed a financial health emergency with my family, I have been motivated to help others learn about the healthcare system and insurance we have today. My Puksta Project is to make underrepresented groups be aware of insurances that are available to help those underprivileged or with low income be able to pay for their medical bills, medicine, appointments, etc. It’s important that we take care of ourselves and know that asking for help is not a sign of weakness. Your health is a priority.

Graduation year: 2021
**PUKSTA SCHOLAR ATTENDS 2017 NACEP NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON DC**

By Oliver Martinez-Reyes, Puksta Scholar

On October 9, 2017, Oliver Martinez-Reyes, a first year student at the University of Denver and Puksta Foundation Scholar, participated on a student panel with Dr. Kim Hunter Reed, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education. The student panel session was the opener for the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) Conference that took place in Washington D.C. Oliver answered questions about his experience with concurrent enrollment, a program that provides high school students the opportunity to take college credit classes taught by a college approved high school teacher. The classes are offered at high schools or local community colleges at either low or no cost to the students.

When asked why he decided to participate in concurrent enrollment, Oliver started by explaining that he is a first generation student and college was not typical of family conversation. One of his close friends from school encouraged Oliver to join the program and helped him navigate the road to college. As beneficial as the program is, Oliver shared that there were tough moments because he had to “make those small sacrifices that in high school seem pretty big to the majority of students.” There were classes that Oliver took on Saturday mornings and Friday evenings sacrificing his social time. When asked why he made these sacrifices and how he stayed committed to the program, he responded with, “you have to remind yourself of the bigger picture.”

Oliver also delivered words of motivation and inspiration. As a participant of concurrent enrollment students get the same resources as any college student on campus and in his words, “you got a ticket to a seat and you belong there just as everyone else.”

Oliver’s highlight of participating in concurrent enrollment was building relationships with his professors. His thirst for business knowledge kept him in constant dialogue after class with one of his business professors. Oliver and his professor nourished such a strong relationship that his professor offered him a paid summer internship. He worked on a state initiative grant that provided both intensive one-day BootUp camps and multi week camps. These camps exposed underrepresented students to different career industries. Overall, Oliver did a phenomenal job not only representing the University of Denver, but also representing the students in Colorado who are part of the concurrent enrollment program. After this experience, Oliver’s Puksta project will be focused on higher education access for individuals in his community. His closing remarks to the audience, full of educators and policy makers, was “fail fast, fail forward,” something he hopes others keep in mind.

**To see the full student panel video click [here](#), Oliver and the panel of students start around 38:30**
SERVICE LEARNING SCHOLARS WORKSHOP BRINGS TOGETHER FACULTY FROM ACROSS CAMPUS TO CREATE AND INNOVATE

By Morgan Stevens, Community Engaged Fellow

Often in higher education, metaphorical and physical “silos” prevent faculty from being privy to the work that their colleagues in other departments are doing. The paradox is that Biology and Social Work are likely working towards some similar goals. Yet, both disciplines and their diverse skill sets and perspectives aren’t sitting together around the proverbial table. Why?

With the advent of DU Impact 2025 and DU Grand Challenges, the University hopes to address this disconnect. A structure is being built to enable innovative interdisciplinary connections and collaborations not only to happen with greater ease, but also to become a permanent part of the campus culture.

Enter the Service Learning Scholars Workshop hosted by the Center for Community Engagement and Service-Learning (CCESL); a great example of these efforts. Inspired by a cornerstone of CCESL’s mission, the promotion of community-engaged scholarship, the two-day gathering offers opportunities for students and faculty to acquire new methods for advancing their critical thinking, developing civic skills, and tackling public problems.

Attendees of the workshop learned best practices for designing and implementing service-learning courses alongside individuals whom they may have never met before. This year’s workshop boasted the greatest number of participants in comparison to previous years, spanning from Engineering faculty to Creative Writing faculty. It was encouraging to observe that, as a pedagogy, service-learning is now being better incentivized and more widely utilized.

In the face of the ever-changing and increasingly technological educational landscape, participants shared how they’re grappling with new challenges. For example, one administrator brainstorming how service-learning may be adapted for online courses, wondered how it could be effective in classes that are international in scope. Others pondered questions about how to create meaningful measures of the impact of their coursework on student, faculty and community partners.

For me, a key takeaway was that when it comes to service learning, there is a spectrum of success. Planning is necessary, but not everything goes to plan. These aren’t setbacks as much as they are the reality of doing authentic, community-engaged work. Instead, I favor reframing them as opportunities for students and faculty to practice resilience. As a student in the graduate School of Social Work and as a community-engaged fellow with CCESL, I see the benefit of service-learning as praxis; the bridge between theory and practice.

*To learn more about the Service Learning Scholars Workshop, please click here.
CONSPIRE TO ORGANIZE IN A POLARIZED ERA: 2017 COMMUNITY ORGANIZING INSTITUTE

By Jenni Bills; CCESL Administrative Assistant

DU students, faculty, and staff as well as members from the Denver community came together for the annual Community Organizing Institute hosted by CCESL on October 6, 2017.

Participants learned about the power how to use it for social change via community organizing. Participants were placed in small groups at tables with student facilitators at each table to lead discussions, reflections, and activities throughout the event. The day included a keynote speaker, Angela Cobián, who was also the keynote speaker for the Community Organizing Institute in 2015. Cobián discussed how her identities have impacted her community organizing work, in addition to how participants can leverage their own experiences to guide their organizing work. The theme of the Community Organizing Institute was “Conspire to Organize in a Polarized Era.”

Cobián used many examples of effective organizing, but one that stood out was an example of a school of fish. Individually, it would be more difficult for a small fish to escape one giant fish. However, when many fish came together, they were bigger and stronger than the original giant fish. Community organizing values when organizers from diverse backgrounds, identities, and beliefs come together to learn from one another.

Throughout the day, students participated in activities and discussions with their teammates as well as with partners from other tables. Topics discussed included identities, self-interests, public action, the world as it is versus the world as it should be, privilege, oppression, and power. Activities included power mapping (a visual representation of who the stakeholders are for a social issue and how they are connected to one another), one-to-one interviews (a technique used to help others find their self-interest and motivation), and the evaluation of the effect of privilege and oppression on communities and individuals. The final small group activity was creating a power map of a specific issue that the participants chose as important to them and their communities. Selected issues included education, sustainability, immigration, and more. Group members worked together to make a visual representation of who had positive, negative, and neutral influence over their selected social issue and how these stakeholders were connected to each other.

All activities and topics added to participants’ existing knowledge of

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community organizing. Participants gained new tools regarding community organizing and engagement that many of them can begin implementing in their work or volunteering with their communities. Issue-selection, problem solving, and collaboration were just some of the techniques used in-group activities promoting teamwork and simulating dilemmas that they may face while working in the community. There were pre- and post-assessments to gauge participants’ knowledge of community engagement and organizing before and after the event. Comments from the post assessments included:

- “I learned a lot about my self-interest on healthcare and education. I also got to meet wonderful people.”
- “There are so many brilliant, able, and willing people here who want to make a change. I have a lot of privilege, privilege that I shouldn’t feel guilt for having but instead a fire to have change.”

Students in CCESL programs are required to attend the institute, but we encourage folks from across campus to join. If you are interested in attending the 2018 Community Organizing Institute, send us an email and we will notify you when registration opens next Fall!

**UPDATES FROM DU SERVICE & CHANGE**

By Mika Smith, Co-President, DU Service and Change

DU Service and Change (DUSC) had a busy Fall Quarter, and Winter Quarter is only going to bring more service!

For the fourth year in a row, DUSC members participated in Asbury Elementary School’s Fall Carnival. During this event, volunteers operated carnival games, helped register participants, painted faces, and had a blast hanging out with the students!

Additionally, Project Action organized a myriad of events. Volunteers went to the Ronald McDonald House of Denver to serve a homemade lunch, the Humane Society of South Platt Valley to care for animals, and to the Lupus Research Alliance’s fundraiser to help behind the scenes.

DUSC maintained a strong relationship with the Bridge Project by sending DU students to tutor children each week of Fall Quarter. Additionally, we celebrated our one-year partnership with the Littleton Immigrant Resource Center, who we work with by being English language partners and tutors for the U.S Naturalization Test. Volunteers also made blankets to hang in Civic Park for anyone needing a little more warmth, wrote 50 letters of gratitude to DU Campus Safety, and raised money for both The Center for Disaster Philanthropy and Out of the Darkness, organizations dedicated to helping make informed donation decisions and to combating human trafficking.

Winter Quarter brought our annual participation in the MLK Marade, an event which involved both marching and bringing the community together for a service project centered around the ideas of Martin Luther King Jr. We will be continuing our long-term partnerships, add new partnerships, and seek out volunteer opportunities in many sections of our community throughout the quarter too. Finally, DUSC members will spend some time planning for the 6th Annual Day of Action which occurs in the spring. Overall, it has been a wonderful quarter for DUSC.

*To learn more about DUSC and get involved, check out their [webpage](#) or visit their [Facebook](#)*
PC'S FOR PEOPLE JOINS CCESL FOR A COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

By Lauren Collins, Community Engaged Fellow

This Fall CCESL partnered with a local non-profit, PCs for People, on a Scholar Shop project. The Scholar Shop connects community organizations with students and faculty to address public problems through research and/or creative work.

PCs for People was founded in 1998 by Andy Etofon, a social worker in Minnesota, who worked to connect young people with computers as a means to both eliminate e-waste from the waste stream and provide technology to communities to bridge the digital divide. PCs for People primarily serves households that are below the 200% poverty level. In 2009, they opened their second office in Denver, Colorado in partnership with Blue Star Recyclers. For 60% of families who receive a PC, this is their first computer at home. PCs for People has found that computers are catalysts for helping students and their multigenerational family members become productive and thriving citizens.

With CCESL’s Scholar Shop, PCs for People aimed to prove quantitatively that there is value in having a computer at home, rather than students and families being dependent on a library or other resource centers. The community-engagement partnership between the University of Denver and PCs for People transcended the relationship between the community and the CCESL affiliate to include course work in the Morgridge College of Education through the RMS 4900 – Educational Research and Measurement masters level course that introduces students to research design and measurement. The CCESL affiliate used the opportunity to develop surveys and focus group protocols for PCs for People. The instruments developed included survey and focus group protocols for children who received computers. Survey and focus group protocols were also given to the children’s parents. These instruments measure the effect on students and their families of having the gift of a computer.

Next quarter PCs for People will continue their research in partnership with the University of Denver. Please contact Lauren.collins@du.edu if you would like to get involved in the next Scholar Shop project.

CHECK OUT THE NEXT COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT WITH PROJECT HELPING ON FEBRUARY 6

Project Helping is a non-profit organization that creates unique volunteering experience across Denver, San Diego, and Tampa. Their mission is to use the joy of purpose created by volunteering to improve mental wellness by practicing "kindfulness." They have created a great net impact in the communities where they have volunteer projects.

Come to learn about the organization and opportunities for collaboration. Lunch will be provided!

Please RSVP to ccosl @du.edu
REFLECTIONS ON A WINTERY PUKSTA RETREAT

By Ismaat Klaibou, DU Puksta Scholar

Another year and another retreat brought Puksta scholars from across Colorado back together again. New scholars were introduced, and older scholars reunited. Though it happens every year, there was something unique about the retreat this time around. More than ever, the values that Puksta holds were made obvious and bonds were strengthened monumentally. If ever there was a foundation built on love, it is the Puksta Foundation.

This retreat focused immensely on self-care, advocating for one’s self and finding community in our Puksta family. This, of course, is not to say that we neglected our focus on social justice and continuing our impacts. First year Puksta scholar, Margarita, shared that “The Puksta retreat gave me the opportunity to reflect on my own life as well as appreciate what I have because there are others who are facing larger obstacles than me. Thus, it is important that as individuals, we are not passive citizens, but community organizers who have the power to help others and create a loving community. I’m proud to say Puksta is my family.” This year we combined our passions, our attention towards self-improvement, and the love that binds us all together into themes at the retreat.

Whether it be through silly karaoke sessions or intentional conversations addressing what we need help with, it was about building on-on-one connections (with ourselves and with others) that helped us all move closer to our goals, regardless of what those goals may look like. Every successful movement is built on trust and a solid relationship. As first year Puksta scholar, Alex, said, “If there is anything I need- help [making] eggs, a hiking buddy, [or] someone to help me understand networking- I know I can go to my Puksta family.”

At the end of the day, what is community organizing, activism, and societal improvement other than a series of humans that care for one another and seek to make this complex life a little easier on everyone? This is what we learn time and time again during Puksta retreats with scholars from across Colorado. Every voice is important, every issue is one that matters, and every person is equal to another. If the Puksta vision could be expanded to a worldwide platform, each and every one of us recognizing the humanity in the other and each of us realizing that everyone is doing the best that they can, then wouldn’t we see a different world unfolding before us? It is moments like these that I understand just how important it is to come together, and just how much power can be held in the hands of people who support one another, at retreats and outside of them.
ALUMNI CORNER: NEDA KIKHIA

Interview by Alexandra Schweigert; CCESL Business Coordinator

Neda Kikhia graduated from the University of Denver with a double major in Communication Studies and Religious Studies. Despite coming to DU to study International Business, she found that her passions led her down a different route. She also participated in the Pioneer Leadership Program (PLP) and earned a minor in Leadership Studies.

In spite of a full course load and participation in PLP, Neda still managed to be fully engaged with the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CCESL). Originally starting as an administrative assistant with CCESL, Neda found her way into a number of other positions as well. Neda worked as both a coach and team lead for Public Achievement, a Public Good Associate, and a member of DU Service & Change (DUSC). She credits her involvements in many of these programs to great mentors and supportive communities.

Currently, Neda is using her community organizing knowledge to contribute to her current position as a Community Outreach Coordinator at the Pilantrhope Foundation. Despite starting as a Coordinator for Youth Global Leadership, the Foundation quickly realized Neda’s knowledge in community organizing principles and practices and saw the value of transitioning her over to the Community Outreach Coordinator position.

With Neda’s many success, she is also able to recall some of her favorite memories from her time spent in CCESL. Notably, Neda spoke about a Public Achievement retreat where the group found that they had a bit of free time. What started as simple conversations turned into a dance party with dances ranging from salsa, to the wobble, to freestyling. Among the many great memories that Neda made, this one stood out to her because it was a “beautiful demonstration of community!”

When asked what advice should be given to CCESL and DU students, Neda said “really dive in.” Each individual has strengths so make sure to take the time and do the work to understand your identities and how they contribute to your strengths. In addition to this, Neda recommended students stay curious. Be curious about the issues affecting others and how you play a role in those issues. Never stop learning and developing and take some time to talk with your peers about what drives them.

Neda is looking forward to engaging directly with communities in her current role. As part of her goals, she is excited to dive into what is means to be a person of color and how her identities show up in different spaces. Lastly, Neda eventually hopes to return to school and continue her development as a student.
**CCESL STAFF**

- **Anne P. DePrince, PhD**
  Director

- **Cara DiEnno, PhD**
  Associate Director

- **Ryan Hanschen**
  Program Coordinator

- **Alexandra Schweigart**
  Business Coordinator & PGI Editor

- **Vickie Berkley**
  DU Grand Challenges Program Manager

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**Scholarship for Health & Healthy Development**

The Forum will open with very brief lightning talks on the theme of Scholarship for Health & Healthy Development. Dialogue and networking opportunities will then focus on identifying connections between environmental sustainability and inter-related issues that affect daily living.

Lightning talks from our colleagues will be followed by community perspectives, networking, and conversation over beer, wine, and appetizers.

**Thursday, February 22**

4:00-5:30 PM

AAC 290

**DU Grand Challenges Living Forum**

Can’t make it? Join us live from a computer! facebook.com/DUccesl Facebook live streaming of the event will begin around 4:10.

#DUGrandChallenges Join the conversation on Twitter!

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**Carnegie Foundation**

Eliciting Community Engagement Classification

**CCESL**

University of Denver
Center for Community Engagement & Service Learning

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**THE PRESIDENT'S TRAVEL EDUCATION COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD**